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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003437

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: VOTER REGISTRATIONS SLOWLY INCREASING

REF: A) BAGHDAD 3420 B) BAGHDAD 3319

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. After a slow start, the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) on August 18 reported increased registration activity over the past few days, especially in Maysan, Diyala, Salah ad-Din, and Kirkuk provinces. IECI expects registrations to increase during the remaining ten days of the August voter registration period. On August 21 Shia and Kurdist Kurdish negotiators made significant progress on electoral issues, and are poised to present an election law to the TNA based on a mixed system that features 230 seats allocated to governorates with 45 nationwide compensatory seats. Representatives from the Canadian, Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, British, EU, Australian and US Embassies attended an August 18 donor meeting co-chaired by SRSG Qazi, but did not offer new funding commitments to fill a USD 107 million gap in the UN electoral cluster. END SUMMARY.

VOTER REGISTRATION

2. (C) On August 18, the IECI reported increased voter registrations over the past few days, especially in Maysan, Diyala, Salah ad-Din, and Kirkuk. IECI said it expects registrations to increase during the remaining ten days of the voter registration period.

- REGISTRATION ACTIVITY. As of August 17, IECI reported 206,878 registration activities, with the overwhelming majority of applicants requesting to be added to the voter roll. As of August 16, there were 18,122 requests to amend records and 2,119 requests to delete records.

- VOTER REGISTRATION CENTERS (VRCs). During an August 17 press conference, IECI Chairman Izadin stated that 523 VRCs are open and operating -- more than 95 percent of the total VRCs nationwide. Due to security concerns, Izadin said a few VRCs remain unopened in Mosul, Tal Afar and Baghdad. On August 21 UN electoral team leader David Avery said eight VRCs that recently opened in Al-Anbar under a "community" security arrangement are operating well without any security incidents thus far (Ref B). IECI plans to add three more VRCs in Al-Anbar next week.

- IECI CALLING CENTER. As of August 18, the calling center had received 7,114 inquiries related to voter's registration status. About 35 percent of callers are being directed to go to VRCs to register. IECI admitted it has experienced intermittent technical problems with the calling center.

- PUBLIC OUTREACH. IECI said registration nationwide media campaign is in full swing. National infomercial spots are running in 17 TV outlets, including al-Arabia. Additionally, messages are going out on radio, newsprint and posters. However, IECI admitted it has had problems circulating posters in Al-Anbar and Ninewa.

ELECTORAL PREPARATIONS

3. (C) On August 21 Shia and Kurdish negotiators made significant progress on electoral issues, and are poised to present an election law to the TNA based on a mixed system that features 230 seats allocated to governorates with 45 nationwide compensatory seats. Governorate seat allocations will be made by IECI using the voter register data. The latest draft features provisions to protect minority religious parties and women's participation as political candidates.

- CONTRACTS. Tenders for ballot boxes, seals, voting screens, and printing of the referendum ballot paper have been released or are close to being released. IECI said it intends to award some contracts to Iraqi suppliers. Also, IECI is trying to confirm a reported Danish offer to donate ballot boxes.

- POLLING SITES. As in the January election, IECI plans to have about 6,000 polling centers and up to 35,000 polling stations for the referendum and general election.

- IECI STAFFING. The IECI Board of Commissioners dismissed

the directors of the Baghdad West and Baghdad East Governorate Electoral Offices (GEO) for financial irregularities. Their deputies were promoted to acting GEO directors. With respect to polling workers, Commissioner Farid Ayar said that the IECI Board recently took a decision to request that 6,000 judges, lawyers and legal experts head polling centers nationwide.

- REFERENDUM LAW. SRSG Qazi announced in an August 18 donor meeting that the referendum law has been published in the legal gazette without clarification of the Arabic term "nakabin" to mean "those who vote" instead of "those who are eligible to vote." He speculated that perhaps the Supreme Court would clarify. During the August 17 IECI press conference, Commissioner Farid Ayar clarified to the press that, with respect to the veto provision in the referendum law (if two-thirds of voters in three or more provinces reject the constitution) "voters nakabin, mean those who actually vote."

- UN/IFES STAFFING. Currently 14 UN and 12 IFES experts form the international electoral assistance team. A security coordinator is expected to arrive Baghdad in the coming days.

The UN seat on the IECI board has remained vacant since March. Geraldo LeChevalier, was expected to arrive in Baghdad by the end of July. UN contacts in Baghdad report that LeChevalier's transfer has been delayed due to his work with the UN Mission in Haiti.

IECI DONOR CONFERENCE

14. (C) SRSG Qazi co-chaired with IECI Chairman Izadin a meeting on August 18 to solicit funding from donor nation representatives in Baghdad. Qazi asked for new funding to fill a USD 107 million gap in the UN electoral cluster funding mechanism -- more or less the same gap that existed prior to the March UN donor conference held in Jordan. Representatives from the Canadian, Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, British, EU, Australian and US Embassies attended, but did not offer new funding commitments.

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